



Creating Policy, Systems, Environmental Change: Success Story and Lessons Learned

“Teachable Moments for our Younger Generation” (Madera County SS#1)

Intervention Summary

Through the CX3 assessment in our community, our LHD discovered the youth were extremely exposed to multiple unhealthy environments. One particular issue was the over populated number of fast food restaurants nearby or close to their schools. According to the 2013 CX3 assessment, in Madera County children/teens consumed fast food 1 or more times on a weekly basis. Similarly, children/teens consumed 1 or more Sugar-Sweetened Beverage on a daily basis. This was a great opportunity for the LHD to provide and promote healthier activities to teach practical nutritional and educational interventions to the youth. The LHD initial step was to start conversations with two local community centers which are administered by the City of Madera, Parks and Community Services Department. The two identified community centers were: the John Wells Center and the Pan-American Center. On a weekly basis, each center offers activities for the youth of Madera. The PSE topic our LHD elected was *“Healthy Food and Beverage Standards”*. Our goals were to improve access to fruit and vegetables, decrease the number of sugar-sweetened beverages, and decrease the numbers of individuals suffering with obesity in our county. Once, the LHD established relationships with the youth centers and secured an activities calendar for both centers, the SNAP-Ed staff started offering nutrition education including cooking demonstration classes at each center. Each one-hour nutrition education/cooking demonstration was offered once a week at each center. Since the beginning of the interventions, on a weekly basis, the John Wells Center hosted an average of 13-17 youth while the Pan-American Center hosted an average of 17-19 youth. The youth at both centers not only learn practical, healthier, and nutritious ways to prepare meals at home, they also get to discover the components and the benefits of the foods they prepare. The ultimate goal of this activity is to increase the consumption of more fruit, vegetables and water.

Description of Barriers Encountered and Identified or Proposed Solutions

The barriers encountered thus far included:

- The class facilitators reported that at the beginning of the interventions, the facility staff was not aware that a sink had to be available in the room where the cooking demonstrations were taking place. The SNAP-Ed program engaged in conversations with the facility staff to educate them about the importance of having a space that allowed facilitators and youth learn and teach more efficiently.
- Availability of Youth-Friendly Recipes. The cooking demonstration facilitators reported that there is a need for more recipes targeting youth, at the same time the youth reported that the classes needed to include a more hands-on approach. The SNAP-Ed program staff took time to look for recipes which were more hands-on and planned to provide opportunities for the youth to be more involved in the cooking processes of the recipe of the day.
- Availability of Cooking Utensils for all ages. The youth age range for the cooking demonstrations was from 8 years to 13 years. Some of the youth had to learn how to utilize cooking utensils in a safe manner. Some of the older youth shared their frustrations because at times plastic knives had to be used to cut food. This activity sometimes was not part of the cooking process since many items had to be pre-cut to avoid the use of steel knives. The SNAP-Ed Program staff addressed this issue by focusing in the final product, which was to teach healthier options and tasting the recipe of the day.

Future Directions/Sustainable Success

Short term goals include:

- On a weekly basis, to continue with the cooking demonstrations at the two identified centers.
- Finding opportunities to invite more youth to the classes.
- Researching and identifying more youth-friendly recipes that include fresh fruits and vegetables and at the same time culturally appropriate to the community.
- Promoting food demonstration classes at community outreach events.
- Utilizing featured fruits and vegetables through the Harvest of Month materials.

Long term goals include:

- A long-term goal of the SNAP-Ed program in Madera County is to establish constant and regular cooking demonstration classes at these current locations for the next 4 years (until 2019).
- The SNAP-Ed program staff would like to receive training on the “Young Chefs” curriculum, to create cohorts of well-trained youth in the community.
- To keep utilizing the Re-AIM evaluation tool to continue making health improvements among the Madera County population.

Contact information about this Narrative

Local Health Department Grant Name: Madera County Public Health Department

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Author's Name: Jose Arrezola

Phone: 559-675-7893

Email: jose.arrezola@co.madera.ca.gov

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